EU nationals ‘can stay’ if no-deal Brexit

WITH LESS than six months until the UK formally leaves the European Union, what’s the prognosis for our many EU national members in the UK and our numerous UK nationals living and working in the EU?

With the UK already stockpiling medicines to prepare for the eventuality of a chaotic “no-deal” exit from the European Union, the chances of the UK pulling off a deal with the EU which includes Settlement Status (see the June Freelance) for EU nationals here are diminishing. In the event of a really catastrophic no-deal, it’s not even certain what happens to the provisionally agreed transitional period up to 31 December 2020 – during which freedom of movement is supposed to continue.

However, just before we went to press, UK Prime Minister Theresa May in a statement appeared to unilaterally guarantee the rights of EU nationals living in the UK, even in the event of “no deal.” She said, “There are over 3 million EU citizens living in the UK… even if there is no deal your rights will be protected… we want you to stay.” There are no further details yet.

EU nationals in the UK are supposed to be able to start their applications for Settled Status sometime “later in the year”. We’re still waiting for a date, so expect an unseemly “later in the year”. The Commons Brexit Committee at the end of July that it might become “illegal” to pay pensions into the accounts of British pensioners abroad should the UK crash out of the EU without a deal. Brexit Committee Chair Hillary Benn asked ABI’s general director Huw Evans, “They might find that they couldn’t be paid their pension – is that what you are saying?” Evans replied that, yes, “That is a perfectly plausible risk in the future if no agreement is reached in some countries of the EU.”

Church backs NUJ no-nukes policy

London Freelance Branch put a motion to the union’s Delegate Meeting calling for the union to support nuclear disarmament, and it was passed. In July the General Synod of the Church of England voted by 260 to 26 to welcome the 2017 UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. The Chaplain of the Fleet and other members of the armed forces spoke in favour of calling on the government to meet its obligations under Article VI of the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty to seek in “good faith” a world free of nuclear weapons.

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Image © an unknown young visitor to the Natural History Museum – the Freelance must, to its shame, resort to the “await claim” gambit